

government: Do everything you can to make sure there is competition working in our free marketplace. And at that point, he suggested a bipartisan bill that I have dealing with meatpacking and animal—beef—slaughter. So I told him today that maybe we can work on that piece of legislation, as well, in a bipartisan way.

So I could point out three issues that I have moving with Democrats that could be brought up now. I will bet every one of the 99 Senators in here have bipartisan bills that they could be working on, and we ought to start that process going if we are going to have success for the year of 2022.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Illinois.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT AGREEMENT—EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that, notwithstanding rule XXII, at 5 p.m. today all postcloture time on the Ruiz nomination expire; and that following the confirmation vote, the Senate vote on the motions to invoke cloture on the Puttagunta, Lopez, and Staples nominations in the order listed, without intervening action of debate; further, that if cloture is invoked on any of the nominations, the confirmation votes be at a time to be determined by the majority leader in consultation with the Republican leader.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. DURBIN. I want to notify all Senators that they should expect four rollcall votes beginning at 5 p.m.

UKRAINE

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, there is a photograph that we have all seen: six battle-weary victorious marines raising the American flag on Iwo Jima. It is one of the most iconic photos of World War II.

It was taken 77 years ago this month. Among those six brave marines was a coal miner's son from western Pennsylvania. His name was Sgt Michael Strank. At 25 years of age, he was the oldest of the six flag raisers. The men in his rifle squad idolized him. One of them said: "He was the kind of Marine you read about, the kind they make movies about."

Sergeant Strank used to tell his men: "Follow me and I'll try to bring you all home safely to your mothers."

One week after he raised the American flag atop Mount Suribachi, Michael Strank was killed in the Battle of Iwo Jima. He was the first of the six flag raisers to die.

Today, he is buried among America's heroes in Arlington National Cemetery, but that is not the end of the story.

In 2008, a Marine security guard based at the U.S. Embassy in Slovakia discovered that Michael Strank was not a natural-born U.S. citizen; he had received his citizenship through his fa-

ther when his father became a U.S. citizen in 1935. So where was this marine's marine born? He was the first child born into an ethnic Ukrainian family in what is now Slovakia. Like my own mother, who was born in Lithuania, Michael Strank came to America with his mother as a toddler, as soon as his father could save the money for their passage.

Those who were there that day on Iwo Jima will remember that a loud cheer went up from thousands of marines when they saw, finally, that red, white, and blue of the U.S. flag flying over the highest peak on that island. They knew that that day, in the war between freedom and tyranny, freedom had won.

Today, almost 80 years later, the battle between freedom and tyranny continues, and one of its new flash points is Ukraine. The Ukrainian people have made it clear: They want to be free and independent. They want to chart their own future. They want to choose their own leaders through elections that they conduct.

This is the future that more than 92 percent of Ukrainians chose in a referendum in 1991, after Ukraine declared its independence from the crumbling and corrupt Soviet Union, but Russian President Vladimir Putin—the old KGB agent—refuses to acknowledge Ukraine's right to exist, its right to independence, and its right to self-determination.

For almost 100 days, from November 2013 to January 2014, the Ukrainian people waged a "Revolution of Dignity" to force from office a corrupt, Russian-backed, puppet President—and they won. In retaliation, Russia invaded and annexed the Crimean Peninsula and parts of eastern Ukraine and installed a Russian-friendly government. This forceful occupation of parts of Ukraine by Russia marked the first time, the first time since World War II ended, that one nation had redrawn the map of Europe by force.

For the last 8 years, Russia has tried relentlessly to destabilize the democratically elected Government in Ukraine. This is part of the reason that President Trump's efforts to withhold congressionally approved military aid for Ukraine in order to extract political favors was egregious. Now, Putin has amassed more than 120,000 Russian soldiers on the borders of Ukraine. Whether Putin is driven by megalomaniacal delusions of restoring the Soviet Union or is simply seeking to create chaos and sow dissension among NATO allies is unclear, but here is what is clear: A Russian invasion of Ukraine would constitute a grave assault not only on Ukraine, but on the institutions and agreements that have kept peace in Europe for almost 75 years.

A Russian invasion of Ukraine also could be seen as a danger to our NATO allies in Poland and in the courageous young Baltic democracies in Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia. It would be a cat-

astrophic mistake on Putin's part, and President Biden has made that point over and over.

Chicago is home to one of the largest Polish communities outside of Warsaw, the largest Lithuanian community outside of Vilnius, and one of the largest Ukrainian communities outside of Kyiv. More than 46,000 Ukrainian Americans live in the Chicago area, the third largest Ukrainian community in the United States.

A week ago, I attended a celebration at the Cultural Center in Chicago, on Chicago Avenue in Ukrainian Village. Also speaking at that gathering was Oksana Markarova, Ukraine's Ambassador to the United States. I can tell you, the Polish and Lithuanian communities in Chicago were there standing in solidarity with the people of Ukraine—and with the people of Poland, Lithuania, and the Baltic to decide their own futures.

Vladimir Putin and his henchmen should know that the United States, NATO, and the entire community of democracies also believe that it is the right exclusively of Ukraine and other young democracies to protect their territorial boundaries and decide their own fate. The United States made its position clear yesterday in the U.N. Security Council. Ukraine, the United States, NATO, and the entire community of democracies all want a diplomatic solution to Russia's threats on Ukraine. That is what we seek. If Vladimir Putin wants to avoid a debacle that will cost his nation dearly in lives and treasure, he will agree to this solution.

I commend President Biden, Secretary of State Blinken, and their teams for their strong support of Ukrainian independence and against Russian aggression. The Biden administration has provided significant military equipment for our Ukrainian friends to ensure that President Putin knows the price that a further invasion will cost. The administration has also bolstered the defense capabilities of our NATO partners in Poland and the Baltics. And if Putin is counting on partisan division in the Senate to weaken America's resolve to defend Ukraine and its neighbors, he is mistaken.

Yesterday, Senator GRASSLEY and I introduced a bipartisan resolution celebrating 100 years of diplomatic relations between the United States and the Baltic States and reaffirming our close relationship with these young democracies. Later this week, Senator SHAHEEN and I and several of our colleagues, from both parties, will meet with the Baltic and Polish Ambassadors to reaffirm U.S. support for their nations.

I hope that we will also see strong, bipartisan support for legislation that is being drafted by Senators MENENDEZ and RISCH, the chair and ranking member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. That bill will impose severe, crippling economic sanctions on

Russia for any further invasion of Ukraine. It would bolster similar bruising sanctions drawn up by the Biden administration. It will ensure that any Russian aggression against Ukraine or its neighbors will be felt in Russia by their economy and their people.

I mentioned that my mom came to this country when she was 2 years old, from Lithuania, in 1911. Her boat landed in Baltimore. At the time, Lithuania was under the control of Tsarist Russia. It was a brutal, repressive place.

After World War II, Lithuania became part of the USSR against its will, another brutal and repressive regime. But in 1991, Lithuania became the first Soviet Republic to declare its independence. In response, Soviet tanks under control of Gorbachev rolled in to crush the new Lithuanian democracy. I was there before those tanks arrived. Their Parliament is called the Seimas. They had put sandbags around the outside of it to try to stop the Soviets and their tanks. They took me in the back, in a small room off to the side, and showed me their arsenal. It consisted of about 10 rifles that had been borrowed from farmers in the countryside to try to defend their capital, Vilnius.

Kids were assembled outside, praying the Rosary in the snow, lighting little candles by the sandbags to show the solidarity of the people of Lithuania, their determination to survive.

Soviet tanks rolled in, killed 13 innocent people, and injured dozens more. But then, to the world's astonishment—and mine too—Prime Minister Mikhail Gorbachev ordered the tanks to withdraw.

Later, another Russian President, Boris Yeltsin, supported Lithuanian independence. Years after his death, Lithuania honored him with an award for his commitment to Lithuanian statehood and bilateral relations between Lithuania and Russia.

Mikhail Gorbachev and Boris Yeltsin understood that you can brutalize a people who are determined to be free, but you can never defeat them. Ultimately, freedom will win. It is a tragedy that Russian President Putin cannot or will not learn that same lesson of history today when it comes to Ukraine.

Seventy-seven years ago, an American marine born in Ukraine raised the American flag on Iwo Jima. Today, a generation of young Ukrainians raised in freedom are holding high the yellow-and-blue flag of their own nation and saying: We too want to be free. Our message to them is very simple and straightforward: You are not alone.

Like the shipyard workers in Gdansk and the other members of the Polish Solidarity movement who helped bring an end to the decrepit and brutal Soviet Union—like the 2 million Estonians, Latvians, and Lithuanians who actually physically joined hands to defend freedom across their nations—history and the free world will stand with you.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. PORTMAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

UKRAINE

Mr. PORTMAN. Mr. President, I am here today to talk about the escalating aggression by Russia against Ukraine, an ally and a sovereign country whose territorial integrity is once again under attack. In our generation, this is where the fight for freedom is being held; this is where it is being waged. It is going to affect not just Ukraine and Eastern Europe but countries all over the world, depending on the outcome.

Today, I am going to address what I think the appropriate role is for us as Americans, what more we can do to help avoid what could become an international disaster and a humanitarian crisis.

Russia is the aggressor here, having invaded Ukraine twice in the past 8 years, illegally annexing Crimea, inserting troops and offensive military weaponry into the Donbas region of Ukraine, initiating cyber attacks against public and private entities in Ukraine, and using disinformation to try to destabilize the democratically elected Government of Ukraine.

Now they have gone further by amassing more than 100,000 troops under the command of 100 tactical groups on Russia's Ukrainian border. This Russian deployment includes rockets and tanks and artillery and is no longer just on the eastern border of Ukraine, but it is now across the borders, including the northern border, where Russian combat troops and heavy equipment have gone into Belarus. And on the Belarus-Ukrainian border, a Russian presence is being felt. It is also in Crimea and in the Black Sea area, where Russia is taking advantage of their illegal annexation to move troops in those areas close to Ukraine.

I will give you a little history about how we got here. Eight years ago, the people of Ukraine made a clear choice. They stood up to a Russian-backed, corrupt government in 2014 and made a conscious decision to turn to the West, to the European Union, to us, the United States of America.

I was in Ukraine in 2014, shortly after what is called the Euromaidan, also the Revolution of Dignity. The barricades were still there. And in the center of town, the Maidan, in Kyiv, was occupied still by Ukrainian patriots, insisting that Ukraine chart its own course. The Ukrainian people had rejected authoritarianism and, instead, embraced freedom, embraced democracy, freedom of speech, freedom to gather, freedom for the respect of law, respect for the judicial institutions in the country, and free markets.

Now, have they stumbled along the way sometimes with regard to reforms, including of the judicial system? Yes, of course. Most fledgling democracies do; all of them do. But they have made tremendous progress, and they are on their way toward becoming what they wanted to become at the time 8 years ago—again, this Revolution of Dignity that is called the Euromaidan—more like a Western European or Eastern European country that is part of the EU.

Despite Russia's unrelenting efforts to destabilize Ukraine over the past 8 years, the people of Ukraine have remained committed to this independent, sovereign, and democratic principle, that vision.

And Ukrainians today are actually increasingly patriotic and opposed to the Russian efforts to destabilize their country. According to polling data, this sentiment is especially true among young people, which makes sense because they have tasted the fruits of freedom—free enterprise, the ability to express themselves, the ability to connect with the rest of the free world. They don't want state control. They don't want repression. They don't want fear. Instead, they want liberty and prosperity.

Moscow and Russia would have the world believe that somehow this massive, unwarranted Russian buildup is about trying to shore up its border against threats from Ukraine and from NATO, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. Nothing could be further from the truth, of course. This is patently false. Ukraine's military posture has always been defensive. Unlike Russia, Ukraine has upheld its commitments under the Minsk agreements, which were designed to ensure a ceasefire in the Donbas region, the eastern part of Ukraine. NATO, of course, is defensive. It is not an offensive group and is no threat to Russian territorial integrity.

My hope is that Congress can come together this week—Republicans, Democrats, Senate, and House—and issue a strong message to the people of Ukraine that we stand with them in their fight for freedom; to Russia that if they choose to invade, the armed conflict will carry a heavy cost, and the sanctions that would result from that would be devastating; and then to the world that the United States stands with its allies, not just in Eastern Europe but throughout the freedom-loving countries of the world.

I am hoping Congress will pass an extensive sanctions package, including increased security funding for Ukraine, more resources for cyber security, and funding for the Global Engagement Center at the U.S. State Department to help push back on Russian disinformation.

I want to say a word about our allies. In many respects, I believe that what Vladimir Putin has done by these aggressive actions we talked about is to strengthen the transatlantic alliance,